4

Religious Education Curriculum Constructions in Northern and Western Europe: A Three-Country Analysis

Kerstin von Brömssen and Graeme Nixon

Religious education (RE) is currently being discussed in many parts of the world.[1] These discussions can be viewed from challenging social and cultural processes, such as secularization/re-sacralization, migration, and digitalization. These factors are often mentioned within a post-secular discourse, which has emerged together with several other concepts, such as post-modernism, post-structuralism, and post-colonialism, all of which have contested understandings and interpretations (see Carlsson and Thalén 2015; Lewin 2017, 15–35).[2] As Jensen and Kjeldsen argue, the debates on RE are "clearly part and parcel of ongoing culture wars" linked to societal and, in turn, educational challenges (2013, 186). The discussions concerning religion and RE are also linked to discussions on

K. von Brömssen (✉)
University West, Trollhättan, Sweden
e-mail: kerstin.von-bromssen@hv.se

G. Nixon
School of Education, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, UK
e-mail: g.nixon@abdn.ac.uk

O. Franck, P. Thalén (eds.), *Religious Education in a Post-Secular Age*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47503-1_4

policies at a macro level. For example, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations are all active in promoting the view that education should foster social cohesion, tolerance, and human rights (Council of Europe 2002, 2008a, b; OSCE 2007; United Nation 2006). Educational policy actors in many states struggle with constructing RE, in which processes and complex relationships between global ideas and their dissemination and re-contextualization in local settings become a key task (e.g., Ball 2012; Rizvi and Lingard 2010; Verger et al. 2018; Wahlström 2015).

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse and discuss the subject of RE in Northern and Western Europe from a discursive reading of three different RE curricula for state-maintained primary and lower-secondary schools in Denmark, Scotland, and Sweden.[3] These curricula were selected because they represent three different societal contexts. However, these countries are situated rather close to each other, both in terms of geography, in northwestern Europe, and religious outlook (non-confessional, non-denominational, integrative RE). This chapter argues that even within a rather uniform description of the subject, there are still relatively large differences in the curricula that often get lost in the debate about RE in public schools (cf. Jensen and Kjeldsen 2013; Schreiner 2015).

This chapter has three parts. The first section frames the discussion on RE from both a curriculum theoretical perspective and the question: *Why study a school subject*. We also briefly explain our method for analyzing the three curricula. The second part analyzes the curricula, starting with a short description of the national context within which each RE subject is constructed. The last section draws conclusions from the analyses and brings these into a discussion concerning RE in light of the current discourse on post-secularity.

Curriculum Theoretical Perspectives and "Why Study a School Subject"

As a research field, curriculum studies are thought to trace back to 1918, with the seminal work *The Curriculum*, by Franklin Bobbitt. However, it grew substantially after WWII through critical work by Basil Bernstein, Michael F. D. Young, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, and William Pinar.[4] In such a curriculum theoretical perspective, educational institutions are seen as agents of the dominant society and reflect its underlying cultural patterns. Such patterns are formulated in educational institutions' policies, such as curricula, or what is perceived to be "legitimate knowledge [that] we all must have" (Apple 1979, 63–64; Bernstein 1971; Lundgren 1983; cf. Wahlström 2015). Therefore, educational institutions confer cultural legitimacy on knowledge, so are caught up in a network of other political, economic, and cultural institutions that are basically unequal (Apple 1979, 63–64). Consequently, curriculum-making processes capture a wide-ranging set of activities and practices that emerge in webs of national and local understandings, beliefs, and practices embedded in power relations (Westbury 2008, 50). These other regional and local institutions affect the education organization, but the national level is often the most powerful. Pinar (2012, 493) explains curriculum construction as "an extraordinary complicated conversation." Furthermore:

> Through the curriculum and our experience of it, we choose what to remember about the past, what to believe about the present, what to hope for and fear about the future. (Pinar 2008, 493)

Gulson et al. (2015, 7) agree and state that policy formation is "an arena of contestation, struggle and negotiations between actors who may operate outside formal governmental structures." Therefore, issues regarding educational policy and the curriculum are always important, relevant, and often hotly debated.

The Concept of Curriculum

The curriculum generally focuses on the selection and organization of specific knowledge, skills, and manners to fit the particular needs of students and the unique operational structure of schools. However, there are many different definitions for the concept of *curriculum* (cf. Brubaker 2004, vii–viii). In this chapter, *curriculum* refers to the national course of study or the *curriculum-as-plan* as the aims, objectives, and outcomes (in other words, what is desirable for society, the child, and the knowledge and skills) that learners are expected to acquire at different grades. We sometimes also use the concept of *education policy* or *policy* for such a curriculum-as-plan.

In constructing curriculum or educational policy, educators and policy-makers come back to the same basic question: "Which knowledge is of most worth" (Pinar 2012, 1–2). Each new decade witnesses a debate on curriculum content, the importance of various school subjects, and the best way to transfer knowledge. This is obvious, as new knowledge shapes our understanding, attitudes, and behavior. Following such changes, curricula must also change. Education policy reforms must also create and maintain power dimensions that circulate globally, visible through the educational arenas, which produce both possibilities and limitations within national educational institutions (Verger et al. 2018, 2–34).

Currently, curriculum theory research is a large and complex field that can be studied from critical, political, feminist, ethnic, and ecological viewpoints, among others (see f. ex. Rasmussen and Gowlett 2015). We chose to examine the RE school curriculum in three national contexts, using four historical curriculum orientations derived from Eisner and Vallance, reworked by Deng and Luke (2008, cf. Wahlström 2015, 37–39).

A Study of a School Subject

School subjects are often taken for granted and as a given (Goodson and Marsh 1996, 1). However, school subjects within the curriculum are constructed, or made up, and intersect with different societal structures and

power relationships. Therefore, teaching a school subject is never a neutral activity. It is normative and prescriptive, and reproduces parts of a cultural transmission (Deng and Luke 2008; Taylor 2004). Therefore, school subjects create "regimes of truth" for organizing school knowledge and set the framework for the school's organization and teaching (Goodson and Marsh 1996, 1–2). Furthermore, school subjects have been constructed at different time periods. Major "selective traditions" have grown up within school subjects (Apple 1990; Williams 1989) and act as tacit frameworks for selecting content and method (Williams 1989; Sund and Wickman 2011). Therefore, we deem that closely reading our case curricula for RE is interesting, as they show which knowledge content, values, and religious literacies are considered legitimate, worthwhile, and actionable as a future citizen. In other words, we hope "to see how curriculum is a contested cultural document that excludes some identities as it includes others" (Watt 2016, 26).

Curriculum Perspectives on School Subjects

The normative questions on which types of knowledge should be included or excluded in a school subject are most interesting for curriculum theorists and developers, as well as teachers in their daily work of selecting instruction content. The responses to these questions depend on theoretical orientations and perspectives, as well as ideological and cultural opinions and positions (Deng and Luke 2008, 6).

Our work is inspired by a well-known, often-used framework for analyzing a school subject, based on four, historical, curriculum orientations originally derived from Eisner and Vallance (1974, 1–18),[5] and further used by Deng and Luke (2008). The four curriculum orientations are *academic rationalism*, *social efficiency*, *humanism*, and *social reconstructionism*. These will be used as an analytic framework and discussed in conjunction with our analysis.

Reading and Analyzing Policy Texts/Curricula in a School Subject

Our method of analyzing the RE texts is inspired by a Critical Discourse Analysis approach (CDA), in which language is viewed as a social phenomenon and part of social practice, upheld and articulated by different actors (Fairclough 2003, 23–28). Therefore, discourse theory in general is concerned with human expressions, most often in the form of spoken or written language. A basic view within discourse theory is that when people say or write, they use fused, generally accepted knowledge in a society, while also feeding back to society when repeating and reinforcing such shared knowledge (Chilton 2004). Spoken or written discourses are articulated and networked with other, non-discursive elements in various ways in "orders of discourse" (Fairclough 2003, 25). Certain discourses not only include what is said and articulated, but also determine what actually can and can't be said, and what is and isn't acceptable. In this approach, the word *critical* signifies an attempt to analyze structural relationships of dominance, power, and control, as manifested in language (Fairclough 1995, 23–25, 2003, 11). Therefore, power is a central concept in CDA (Fairclough 1995, 1), as it differentiates, selects, includes, and excludes (cf. von Brömssen and Athiemoolam 2018; Cohen et al. 2018, 687–688).

Methodologically, we first located each of the curriculum texts into the national educational contexts of Denmark, Scotland, and Sweden. It is worth noting that a curriculum text constitutes a specific genre. In our cases, the curricula texts are three states' educational policy texts.[6] As mentioned previously, such policy-making is seen as an arena of struggle over meaning or "the politics of discourse" (Taylor 2004). This closely follows Pinar's "complicated conversations" (2012, 493). Second, we marked important features within sentences, as well as individual words in the curriculum texts, to make key themes and categories that spoke to Deng and Luke's (2008) theoretical framework.

The Background and Context of RE in Denmark

In 1536, the Evangelical Lutheran People's Church was established in Denmark after the Lutheran reformation replaced Roman Catholicism. This tradition is still the majority within Denmark, with a membership of more than 70%[7] (cf. Buchardt 2014; Jensen 2005). The Constitution of 1849 introduced democracy and freedom of religion, but the Lutheran-Protestant Church (with the additional name *Folk-Church*) continued to function as the state religion. The relationship between the state and the church is much debated, but "the Folk-Church is part of the so-called Danish tradition and integral to something called Danishness" (Jensen 2005, 66). However, globalization has changed Denmark, as well as the rest of Europe, into a multicultural nation with many different traditions and lifestyles. However, Jensen (2005, 66) argues that Denmark "is not a multi-religious country," as "the total amount of members of other non-Christian religious amounts to no more than one percent." Even if Europe's multiculturalism has increased, Jensen's argument is still interesting, as European multiculturalism often seems to be uncritically enlarged in debates.

Despite establishment of freedom of religion, RE in Denmark was confessional until 1975 (Jensen 2005, 67; Jensen and Kjeldsen 2013, 193). In 1960, the possibility of teaching foreign religions was added to the Danish curriculum and enlarged in 1975 with content labeled as *Foreign Religions and Other World Views* (Jensen and Kjeldsen 2013, 193–194). In a 1993 comprehensive curriculum reform, a content area called *Life-philosophy and Ethics* was introduced (Jensen and Kjeldsen 2013, 199). This content, influenced by Danish theologians Grundtvig and Løgstrup, has been called anti-intellectual for its criticism of reason and its romanticized view of the child (Böwadt 2009a, b).

The RE curriculum is mandatory in all forms of education, except during the year in which confirmation and its preparation take place (Folkeskoleloven § 5 stk. 2).[8] This clearly shows a continued connection between education and the Danish Lutheran-Protestant Church, or the *Folk-Church*. The school and the local church coordinate confirmation

preparation time and the school schedule to ensure this can take place. It is also possible to opt out from RE. As the children are still under school supervision, parents and schools must agree on other activities children who opt out of RE will carry out during this time.

An Analysis of the RE Non-denominational Subject in Denmark

The current RE subject in public schools is called *Kristendomskundskab*, or *Knowledge of Christianity*. The overall aim of the RE subject is stated as:

> Students in the subject *Knowledge of Christianity* must acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to understand and relate the significance of the religious dimension to the individual's perception of life and its relationship to others. (*Knowledge on Christianity*, The purpose of the subject 2019, 3)

The name *Knowledge of Christianity* signals quite a monoreligious concept of the subject. The specific concept of the religious dimension is also introduced, but without further explanations in the curriculum. Jensen and Kjeldsen (2013, 201) discuss the concept of *religious dimension*:

> The premise for the description of the subject is that the human being is conceived of as imbued with a deep need for searching for the meaning of life […]. The questioning of the fundamental condition of life, with no un-ambiguous [or 'easy'] answers, is what is defined as the religious dimension of life.

In the second paragraph of the purpose of the subject, perspectives on Christianity as a historical and a current phenomenon, and Biblical stories are selected as overall content. The stories about which students should have knowledge should be significant for "the values of our cultural context." The meaning of this raises questions, as this expression both excludes and includes unspecified values and cultures. However, students in 9th grade are required to have knowledge on "other religions and life views." Jensen and Kjeldsen mention that the guidelines allow for

teaching in this area and *may* also take place at the primary level (2013, 201). The second paragraph reads as follows:

> Students must acquire knowledge of Christianity in historical and contemporary contexts, as well as biblical narratives and their significance for the values of our cultural context. In addition, students in the oldest grades must acquire knowledge of other religions and life views. (*Knowledge on Christianity*, The purpose of the subject 2019, 3)

In the third paragraph of the purpose, student competencies are mentioned, underlining personal attitudes, co-responsibilities, and actions in a democratic society:

> Students should be able to use their professional skills in personal attitudes, co-responsibility and action in a democratic society. (*Knowledge on Christianity*, The purpose of the subject 2019, 3)

Thereafter, the curriculum mentions common goals—three goals in each of the four themes or content areas. The four content areas are (1) *Life-philosophy and ethics,* (2) *Biblical narratives,* (3) *Christianity,* and (4) *Non-Christian religions and other world views*. Of these ten common goals, only one connects to the theme of *Non-Christian religions and other world views*:

> The student can relate to main ideas and issues in the origins, history and present forms of life of the major world religions and other life views. (*Knowledge on Christianity*, Common goals 2019, 4)

The common goal is "relate to main ideas," which is qualitatively different from the other competence goals. The other goals are formulated as "must acquire" and "should be able to use," which is also used for the other common goals in the curriculum.

The first theme in the Danish curriculum is *Life-philosophy and ethics*, and the common goal for the oldest student in grade 9 reads:

> The student can relate to the content and significance of the religious dimension on the basis of basic questions of life and ethical principles. (*Knowledge on Christianity*, Common goals 2019, 4)

As discussed in earlier research, *Life-philosophy and ethics* is a core approach in the Danish curriculum, although hotly contested (see Böwadt 2009a, b). Together with *Biblical narratives*, *Life-philosophy and ethics* "[is] seen as the royal road for learning not just *about* but also *from* religion" (Jensen and Kjeldsen 2013, 201, authors' italics).

In summary, we can conclude from analyzing the Danish RE curriculum, and examining the above examples, that the subject fits in a humanistic curriculum tradition (cf. Deng and Luke 2008), with an overall function to provide each student with knowledge that contributes to personal growth, self-actualization, and an understanding of "the religious dimension." It is heavily weighted toward knowledge of Christianity and Biblical narratives, with only one common goal in relation to "major world religions and other life views." Furthermore, the name of the RE subject signals a Christian-centered, predominantly mono-religious subject.

The Background and Context of RE in Scotland

Christianity remains the largest single religion in Scotland. However, census and social attitude survey data show a decline in self-identification with Christianity and a burgeoning number of people of no religion. The 2011 census revealed, for the first time since records began, that membership of the Church of Scotland was no longer the majority position with regard to religion (National Records of Scotland, 2018). While the current national church is the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, it is important to recognize that it is not under the control of the state. Although 53.8% of the Scottish population identified as Christian in the 2011 census, making it the largest religious group in Scotland, there are several other religions in practice, each with its own history and development (see f. ex. Tinker 2017, 189).

The Scottish Education Act of 1872 created a national system of compulsory elementary schools. Prior to this, the churches financed the Scottish parish school system (Nixon 2016, 6–19; Tinker 2017, 189–190). However, the churches could no longer support the burgeoning school population of the late nineteenth century, so the state intervened. The 1872 Act still provides the legislative framework for non-denominational RE in Scottish schools. By 1918, Catholic schools in Scotland were brought under the Educational Act, while preserving their own Roman Catholic faith ethos (Tinker 2017, 189).

An Analysis of the Non-denominational RME Curriculum in Scotland

The current Scottish *Curriculum for Excellence* covers Scotland's history, as there are two separate sections in the curriculum documents: one for non-confessional and non-denominational schools (Section 2 in the curriculum); and one for Catholic schools following Catholic principles (Section 1 in the curriculum). We analyze the curriculum for non-denominational schools, as this is 85% of all schools (see Nixon 2016).

The RE subject in Scotland is *Religious and Moral Education, Experiences and Outcomes* (RME) and is constructed within three overarching themes: Christianity, world religions selected for study, and development of beliefs and values. The RME is integrative (Alberts 2010), as students share the same classroom, regardless of personal relation to the subject. However, parents have a legal right to withdraw their children from RME if they feel the curriculum conflicts with their own beliefs. In practice, very few parents do so (Nixon 2016). Therefore, RME is a mandatory part of the 3–18 curriculum and one of eight curricular areas. Progress and achievement is assessed and reported in the same way as for other subject areas in Scottish schools.

The introduction to RME in the curriculum states:

> Scotland is now a nation which reflects a wide range of beliefs, values and traditions. Religious and moral education enables children and young people to explore the world's major religions and approaches to living [that]

> are independent of religious belief, and to be challenged by these different beliefs and values. It supports children and young people in developing responsible attitudes to other people, their values and their capacity for moral judgments. (*RME Curriculum*, 22)

As can be seen in the citation above, diversity in Scottish society is underlined right from the beginning, followed by words and phrases, such as *explore*, *to be challenged*, *developing responsible attitudes*, *values*, and *capacity for moral judgment*, connected to children's and young peoples' learning in RME. Immediately thereafter, Scottish religious history is mentioned: "The study of Christianity, which has shaped the history and traditions of Scotland, and continues to exert an influence on national life, is an essential feature of religious and moral education for all children and young people" (*RME Curriculum*, 22).

Christianity is pointed out as the creator of the Scottish religious traditions and continues to affect national life. The many variations in today's religious landscape and influences from different traditions are not mentioned at all, which seems contradictory to the opening paragraph, which may be interpreted as silencing diversity. However, curriculum texts are often contradictory, as they are part of complicated conversations (Pinar 2012, 493).

Within the RME approach, religion is featured as "a human experience," in which students must study both religious and non-religious views. The first content in the text, attributed to the first theme, is *Christianity*. This comprises Christian and Biblical stories; teachings of Jesus and other figures in Christianity; Christian beliefs about God, Jesus, the human condition, and the natural world; and how these beliefs lead to actions for Christians. Christian values and morality have a significant place in the curriculum, stating that these reflections should be extended to the Scottish, as well in the global context. This is framed as: "I can explain how the values of Christianity contribute to as well as challenge Scottish and other societies."

Content for the second theme, *World religions selected for study*, includes the study of world religions, and beliefs and values based upon religious or other positions. The third theme covers content such as understanding what is fair and unfair; developing awareness of diversity of belief in

modern Scotland; and understanding values such as honesty, respect, and compassion, and how they might be applied in relation to moral issues. This is stated in the curriculum as:

> I am able to apply my understanding of a range of moral viewpoints, including those which are independent of religion, to specific moral issues and am aware of the diversity of moral viewpoints held in modern Scotland and the wider world. (*RME Curriculum*)

As seen from the above quotations, Christianity is singled out and put forward within what can be called a *cultural heritage perspective* in the content of the curriculum. This is separate from formulations such as *Christianity and world religions selected for study* and *Recognizing the place of Christianity in the Scottish context*.

Competences that students should acquire in relation to religion and moral values are emphasized through verbs such as: *Apply*, *recognize*, *learn about* and *from*, *explore and develop*, *investigate and understand*, *establish*, *make*, *reflect*, *discern*, and *think critically* and *act*. Interestingly, *establish* is used twice as a strong verb, in terms of the fact that students should "establish values, such as wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity, [and] establish a firm foundation for lifelong learning, further learning, and adult life" (RME Curriculum). A discourse of lifelong learning comes through, which is specific to the Scottish curriculum. Words such as *action* and *lifelong learning*, and the setting "I can apply my developing understanding of morality to consider a range of moral dilemmas in order to find ways which could promote a more just and compassionate society," point toward a social reconstructionist curriculum, which emphasizes its social and political aspects (Deng and Luke 2008). While diversity in society is mentioned in the curriculum, it is not very strongly advocated. However, the curriculum states that RME enables the student to "recognize and understand religious diversity and the importance of religion in society."

Specific attitudes that should be developed in studying RME include developing respect for others and understanding their beliefs and values; understanding what is fair and unfair; why caring and sharing are

important; developing awareness of diverse beliefs in modern Scotland; and understanding values such as honesty, respect, and compassion.

In summary, the non-denominational Scottish RME curriculum has a strong social reconstructionist tradition, calling for a just, pluralistic society. The RME curriculum articulates that reflecting on religious education issues "might lead to changes in society." This RE curriculum also stands in a distinctly moral curriculum tradition, clearly aiming to educate students to make them moral citizens (Linde 2012; cf. McKinney and McCluskey 2017).

The Background and Context of RE in Sweden

Religious education has a long history in Swedish schools (see Hartman 2012; von Brömssen 2018). The Swedish curriculum subject *Knowledge of Religions* is compulsory throughout all grades, from year 1 in primary school to upper secondary school, and is considered integrative. Education about and learning from different religions, worldviews, and ethics take place in religiously mixed classrooms. Since 1997, there have been no opt-out options, as the subject is regarded the same as any other within the curriculum (Lgr 11 and Lgy 11). The curriculum subject has been non-confessional and non-denominational since 1962 and should be neutral in relation to different religions and worldviews (School Law 2010:800, 6§).

An Analysis of the RE Curriculum in Sweden

Religious education in Sweden is currently comparable with any other humanistic or social science subject in public schools. The Swedish RE curriculum initially states:

> Teaching should take as its starting point a view of society characterized by openness regarding lifestyle, outlooks on life, differences between people, and also give students the opportunity to develop a preparedness for understanding and living in a society characterized by diversity. (*Lgr* 11)

The curriculum has a strong societal dimension, underlining a diverse society and diverse outlooks on life as its starting point and a partial motivation for teaching RE. The introductory text below explains the overarching aim of RE for students:

> Teaching in religion should essentially give students the opportunities to develop their ability to: analyse Christianity, other religions and other outlooks on life, as well as different interpretations and use of these, analyse how religions affect and are affected by conditions and events in society, reflect over life issues and their own and other's identity, reason and discuss moral issues and values based on ethical concepts and models, and search for information about religions and other outlooks on life and evaluate the relevance and credibility of sources. (*Lgr* 11)

Thus, Swedish RE is formulated as a secular, plural subject that teaches "religions and other outlooks on life, religion and society, identity and life issues, and ethics." Even so, the curriculum points toward students' abilities to "analyse Christianity, other religions, and other outlooks on life."

As in the Scottish curriculum, there is a cultural-heritage perspective built into the Swedish RE curriculum, in which Christianity is singled out and mentioned first in the text. This actually makes discussing "other religions and other outlooks on life" into an othering exercise and suggests that these worldviews are considered somewhat secondary. Another competing discourse is established by repeated use of the word *different* in the phrase "how people with different religious traditions live with and express their religion and belief in different ways." This wording can contribute to the othering discourse. The dominant, normalized, established discourse relates to Christianity, even though the RE approach should be neutral, according to the Swedish School Law.

The competences in this RE curriculum are *analyze* (twice), *reflect*, *reason*, and *search*. These words point to quite an analytical curriculum, in which students are positioned distant from their studies. For example, ethics should be studied based on ethical concepts and models. However, ethics are not mentioned in relation to the students themselves. Attitudes such as tolerance and respect for others' worldviews are emphasized and highlighted as part of the fundamental values of the school.

The Swedish RE curriculum clearly focuses on knowledge and analysis of different beliefs, rather than primarily on supporting the personal development of students' own thoughts and existential understanding of life (cf. Selander 2011). Using Deng and Luke's definitions (2008), we consider the current Swedish RE curriculum to be categorized as an academic rationalist curriculum. This type of curriculum is focused on making students use and appreciate the ideas and works that constitute various intellectual disciplines; in this case, the academic discipline and canon in religious studies aimed at a primarily scientific understanding of the world.

RE and Post-secularity—A Concluding Discussion

In concluding our analysis of the curricula from Denmark, Scotland, and Sweden, we note that RE plays a role as a mandatory subject in all three educational systems for state-maintained public schools. It is also categorized as a non-confessional, non-denominational subject in each national context. However, the analysis shows that each curriculum differs when it comes to tradition, even if it claims to be non-denominational/non-confessional. Therefore, even though there are global ideas and challenges to education and RE, such as increased national and international testing, standardization, and competitiveness (see Verger et al. 2018), the state and its actors still strongly influence curricula construction, at least when it comes to RE.

Our work here uses a relatively traditional way of analyzing curricula, still interesting as it shows clear differences even though all three curricula are framed within a non-confessional approach. Of course, there are many nuances that can be made within each curriculum tradition. At an overall analytic level, the Danish curriculum follows a humanistic tradition, Scotland's curriculum follows a social constructionist tradition, and the Swedish curriculum uses a rational curriculum tradition. Such traditions have consequences for constructing knowledge of the subject

and how students develop religious literacy. These curricula traditions will, in turn, influence further religious developments in society.

What then about the idea of a post-secular society, and its relevance for RE education and curriculum construction? *Post-secularity* broadly means a renewed interest in religion and spirituality, or some combination thereof in secular societies. However, the concept of *post-secularity* is characterized by wide diversity of opinions and approaches, much of it rather ambivalent. Turner (2016, 24) argues "The idea of the post-secular society means basically that secular authorities can no longer simply ignore religion." We echo Turner's phrase, arguing that education can no longer simply ignore RE. This brings us back to the curriculum theoretical question: Which type of knowledge is most valuable in RE? In global education-policy discussions, literacy, numeracy, and quantitatively measured subjects are hotly debated and currently considered most important. However, subjects in the social and humanistic areas seem undervalued, which risks erasing quality and equality in both education and society as a whole (cf. Sayed et al. 2018).

Therefore, which type of RE subject could be constructed that reflects recent, national and global developments in the very broad field of study areas of religion that are the basis for the RE subject, as well as the goals of educating future citizens in a post-secular society? These are challenging questions. Thinking about RE as policy actors or teachers requires, we think, a global, intercultural view, which many students already might live in their social, everyday lives. It also requires an answer to the question on what the meaning of education is, and furthermore what the meaning of RE is when offered to pupils in public schools. These are "complicated conversations" as argued by Pinar (2012), and even more so in what might be called a post-secular society.

Notes

1. See Alberts, 2010; Aldridge, 2015; Barnes, 2020; Biesta et al., 2019; Chidester, 2003; Conroy 2016; Crisp and Dinham 2019; Cusack and Nurwanto 2017; Dinham and Francis 2015; Dinham and Shaw 2017; Franken 2017; Franken and Loobuyck 2011; Gearon, 2013; Jackson,

2014; Jensen and Kjeldsen, 2013; Kjeldsen, 2019; Kuusisto et al., 2016; Lewin, 2017; Moulin, 2015; Ntho-Ntho and Nieuwenhuis, 2016; and Wielzen and Ter Avest 2017. These are a few of the scholars taking part in the debate. There are many voices, and the field is quickly expanding. See also: Religious Education in Schools. https://iarf.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Religious-Education-in-Schools.pdf. [Retrieved 20200123].

2. The concept of post-secularism is currently gaining relevance (Casanova, 1974; Knott, 2005; Habermas, 2006; Rosati & Stoeckl, 2012; Sigurdsson, 2015). For a critical discussion of the concept, see Turner (2016, 649–667).
3. This chapter draws on previous work in the READY-project (http://www.readyproject.eu/), and the article Religious Literacy in the Curriculum in Compulsory Education in Austria, Scotland and Sweden – a Three-Country Policy Comparison by Kerstin von Brömssen, Heinz Ivkovits and Graeme Nixon in *Journal of Beliefs & Values, Studies in Religion & Education*, (2020). https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2020.1737909. This chapter is extensively rewritten, but the curriculum analysis concerning Scotland and Sweden have partly the same starting points and analyses.
4. For a more extensive elaboration of the field of curriculum studies, see Pinar et al. (2008, 67–238).
5. In their literature review, Eisner and Vallance (1974, 2, 5–14) considered five concepts as major curriculum orientations: Curriculum as development of cognitive processes curriculum; curriculum as technology; curriculum as self-actualization or consumatory experience; curriculum of social-reconstruction relevance; and curriculum as an academic rationalist orientation. Although these perspectives might seem to be from another educational era, their major curriculum orientations still stand today and are important for ongoing curriculum policy debates about the aims of education and the construction of school subjects (see also Deng & Luke, 2008, 6; McNeil, 1985). Deng and Luke (2008) make use of four major curriculum orientations.
6. Scotland is part of the United Kingdom, yet has a certain degree of autonomy.
7. Kirkeministeriet. https://www.folkekirken.dk/om-folkekirken/folkekirken-i-tal (Retrieved 1/11/2020).
8. https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=209946#id73c451e7-10bb-40dc-8fac-311fbc943490 [Retrieved 200131].

References

Alberts, W. (2010). The Academic Study of Religions and Integrative Religious Education in Europe. *British Journal of Religious Education, 32*(3), 275–290.

Aldridge, A. (2015). *A Hermeneutics of Religious Education*. London: Bloomsbury.

Apple, M. W. (1979/2018). *Ideology and Curriculum* (4th.ed. E-book). London: Taylor & Francis.

Apple, M. W. (1990). Is There a Curriculum Voice to Reclaim? *Phi Delta Kappan, 71*(7), 526–530.

Ball, S. J. (2012). *Global Education Inc. New Policy Networks and the Neo-Liberal Imaginary*. London: Routledge.

Barnes, L. P. (2020). *Crisis, Controversy and the Future of Religious Education*. London: Routledge.

Bernstein, B. (1971). On Classification and Framing of Educational Knowledge. In M. F. D. Young (Ed.), *Knowledge and Control* (pp. 47–69). London: Collier-Macmillan. Reprinted in Bernstein, B. (1977) *Class, Codes and Control*: *Volume 3, Towards a Theory of Educational Transmissions* (pp. 85–115). Revised Edition. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Biesta, G., Aldridge, D., Hannam, P., & Whittle, S. (2019). *Religious Literacy: A Way Forward for Religious Literacy.* Brunel University London & Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service. Retrieved January 7, 2020, from https://www.reonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Religious-Literacy-Biesta-Aldridge-Hannam-Whittle-June-2019.pdf.

Bobbitt, F. (1918). *The Curriculum.* Universal Digital Library. Retrieved January 15, 2020, from https://archive.org/details/curriculum008619mbp/page/n6/mode/2up.

Böwadt, P. R. (2009a). *Livsfilosofi og pædagogik. En kritisk undersøgelse af den danske og tyske livsfilosofi med særligt henblik på disse traditioners pædagogiske egnethed* [*Lebensphilosophie and Education. A Critical Study of the Danish and German Lebensphilosophie with Special Consideration of the Applicability of These Traditions to Education*]. E-bok. Gyldendal Uddannelse

Böwadt, P. R. (2009b). The Courage to Be: The Impact of Lebensphilosophie on Danish RE. *British Journal of Religious Education, 31*(1), 29–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200802559981.

Brubaker, D. L. (2004). *Revitalizing Curriculum Leadership. Inspiring and Empowering Your School Community*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

von Brömssen, K. (2018). Constructions of Curriculum in Theory and the Situation in the Classroom, Differences and Commonalities. In P. Schreiner

(Ed.), *Are Your Ready? Diversity and Religious Education Across Europe—The Story of the READY-Project* (pp. 87–89). Münster: Waxmann.

von Brömssen, K., & Athiemoolam, L. (2018). Analysis of Pre-service Teachers' Role-plays on Religious Issues in Classroom Contexts. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 3*(4), 563–573. https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.3.4.13.

Buchardt, M. (1998). Senmoderne udfordringer til læreruddannelsen: Kan man konstruere almengyldige og givne værdier? [Late-Modern Challenges to Teacher Training: Can Universal and Irrefutable Values Be Established?]. *Unge Pædagoger, 7*(8), 3–12.

Buchardt, M. (2014). Religious Education in Schools in Denmark. In *Religious Education at Schools in Europe* (Part 3: Northern Europe) (pp. 45–74). Vienna: Vienna University Press.

Buchardt, M. (2017). Religious Education Research in Welfare State Denmark. A Historical and Institutional Perspective on an Epistemological Discussion. *Nordidactica—Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education, 2017*(1), 49–65.

Carlsson, D., & Thalén, P. (red.). (2015). *Det postsekulära klassrummet. Mot ett vidgat religionskunskapsbegrepp* [*The Postsecular Classroom. Towards an Expanded Concept of Religion*]. Uppsala: Swedish Science Press.

Casanova, J. (1974). *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Chidester, D. (2003). Religion Education in South Africa: Teaching and Learning About Religion, Religions, and Religious Diversity. *British Journal of Religious Education, 25*(4), 261–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141620030250402.

Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing Political Discourse. Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education* (8th ed.). London: Routledge.

Council of Europe. (2002). *Recommendation Rec (2002)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Education for Democratic Citizenship*. Retrieved November 1, 2020, from www.coe.int.

Council of Europe. (2008a). *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*. Retrieved January 11, 2020, from www.coe.int.

Council of Europe. (2008b). *Recommendation CM/Rec (2008)12 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Dimension of Religions and Non-religious*

Convictions Within Intercultural Education. Retrieved January 11, 2020, from www.coe.int.

Curriculum for Excellence. *Religious and Moral Education. Experiences and Outcomes*. Retrieved November 2, 2019, from https://education.gov.scot/Documents/rme-eo.pdf.

Cusack, C. M., & Nurwanto, N. (2017). Addressing Multicultural Societies: Lessons from Religious Education Curriculum Policy in Indonesia and England. *Journal of Religious Education, 64*(3), 157–168.

Deng, Z., & Luke, A. (2008). Subject Matter. Defining and Theorizing School Subjects. In M. F. Connelly, F. H. Ming, & J. Phillion (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction* (pp. 66–85). London: Sage Publications.

Eisner, E. W., & Vallance, E. (1974). Introduction—Five Conceptions of Curriculum: Their Roots and Implications for Curriculum Planning. In *Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum* (pp. 1–18). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse and Text: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.

Goodson, I., & Marsh, C. J. (1996). *Studying School Subjects*. London: The Falmer Press.

Gulson, K. N., Clarke, M., & Bendix Petersen, E. (2015). *Education Policy and Contemporary Theory. Implications for Research*. London: Routledge.

Habermas, J. (2006). On the Relations Between the Secular Liberal State and Religion. In H. de Vries & L. E. Sullivan (Eds.), *Political Theologies. Public Religions in a Post-secular World* (pp. 251–260). New York: Fordham University Press.

Hartman, S. (2012). *Det pedagogiska kulturarvet. Traditioner och idéer i svensk undervisningshistoria* [*The Educational Cultural Heritage. Traditions and Ideas in Swedish Teaching History*]. Stockholm: Natur och Kultur Akademisk.

Jackson, R. (2014). *Signposts—Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Jensen, T. (2005). European and Danish Religious Education: Human Rights, the Secular State and Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality. *Religion and Education, 32*(1), 60–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/15507394.2005.10012351.

Jensen, T., & Kjeldsen, K. (2013). RE in Denmark—Political and Professional Discourses and Debates, Pats and Present. *Temenos, 49*(2), 185–223.

Jensen, T. (2000). Et religionskritisk religionsfag—en sekulær stats svar på den flerreligiøse udfordring (A Critical RE—The Reaction of a Secular State to the Challenges of Religious Diversity). In L. Christoffersen & J. Bæk Simonsen (Eds.), *Visioner for Religionsfrihed, Demokrati og Etnisk Ligestilling* (pp. 103–132). København: Nævnet for Etnisk Ligestilling.

The Journal i.e. Religion in the Classroom: How Other Countries in the EU Deal With It. August 3, 2016. Retrieved October 12, 2019, from https://www.thejournal.ie/religion-classroom-eu-examples-primary-divestment-2887905-Aug2016/.

Knott, K. (2005). *The Location of Religion. A Spatial Analysis*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd..

Kristendomskundskab, Fælles Mål 2019. Børne—og Undervisningsminsiteriet. Retrieved January 11, 2020, from https://emu.dk/sites/default/files/2019-08/GSK.%20Fælles%20Mål.%20Kristendomskundskab.pdf.

Lewin, D. (2017). *Educational Philosophy for a Post-secular Age*. London: Routledge.

Lgr 11, Curriculum for the Compulsory School, Preschool Class and School-Age Educare 2011. Revised 2018. Stockholm: The National Agency for Education.

Linde, G. (2012). *Det ska ni veta! En introduktion till läroplansteori* [*You'll Know! An Introduction to Curriculum Theory*]. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Lundgren, U. P. (1983). Social Production and Reproduction as a Context for Curriculum Theorizing. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 15*(2), 143–154.

McKinney, S. J., & McCluskey, R. (2017). Does Religious Education Matter in Non-denominational Schools in Scotland? In M. Shanahan (Ed.), *Does Religious Education Matter?* (pp. 152–166). London: Routledge.

McNeil, J. D. (1985). *Curriculum: A Comprehensive Introduction* (3rd. ed.). Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Moulin, D. (2015). Doubts about Religious Education in Public Schooling. *International Journal of Christianity & Education, 19*, 135–148. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056997115583583.

National Records of Scotland. (2018). Retrieved February 17, 2020, from https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/.

Nixon, G. (2016). Conscientious Withdrawal from Religious Education in Scotland: Anachronism or Necessary Right? *British Journal of Religious Education, 40*(1), 6–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2016.1161597.

Ntho-Ntho, A. M., & Nieuwenhuis, J. (2016). Religion in Education Policy in South Africa: A Challenge of Change. *British Journal of Religious Education, 38*(3), 236–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2014.984583.

OSCE—Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. (2007). *The Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religion or Belief in Public Schools*. Retrieved January 11, 2020, from www.osce.org.

Pinar, W. F. (2008). Curriculum Theory Since 1950: Crisis, Reconceptualization, Internationalization. In F. M. Connelly, M. F. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction* (pp. 491–513). London: Sage.

Pinar, W. F. (2012). *What is Curriculum Theory?* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Ramirez, F. O., & Boli, J. (1987). The Political Construction of Mass Schooling. European Origins and Worldwide Institutionalism. *Sociology of Education, 60*(1), 2–17.

Rasmussen, M. L., & Gowlett, C. (2015). Queer Theory, Policy and Education. In K. N. Gulson, M. Clarke, & E. Bendix Petersen (Eds.), *Education Policy and Contemporary Theory. Implications for Research*. London: Routledge.

Religious Education in Schools: School Education in Relation with Freedom of Religion and Belief, Tolerance, and Non-Discrimination, International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF). (2002). Retrieved January 10, 2020, from https://iarf.net/resources/publications/ReligiousEducationinSchools.pdf.

Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2010). *Globalizing Educational Policy*. London: Routledge.

Rosati, M., & Stoeckl, K. (2012). *Multiple Modernities and Postsecular Societies*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Sayed, Y., Ahmed, R., & Mogliacci, R. (2018). The 2030 Global Education Agenda and the SDG:s Process, Policy and Prospects. In A. Verger, M. Novelli, & H. Kosar Altinyelken (Eds.), *Global Education Policy and International Development. New Agendas, Issues and Policies* (2nd ed., pp. 185–207). London: Bloomsbury.

Schreiner, P. (2015). Religious Education in the European Context. In J. Berglund, T. Lundén, & P. Strandbrink (Eds.), *Crossings and Crosses—Teaching Religion in Border Crossings* (pp. 125–139). Boston and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH.

Selander, S. (2011). Från livsfrågor, etik och reflektion till samhälle, kunskap och analys [From Life Issues, Ethics and Reflection to Society, Knowledge and Analysis]. *Religion & Livsfrågor,* 2, 18–21. Retrieved December 8, 2019, from http://www.flr.se/tidningar/rol-1102.pdf.

Sigurdson, O. (2015). *Det postsekulära tillståndet—Religion, modernitet, politik* [*The Post-secular Condition—Religion, Modernity, Politics*]. Göteborg: Glänta produktion.

Stoeckl, K. (2015) *The Future of Religious Education in Europe*. European University Institute. Retrieved January 12, 2020, from https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/784a01b0-ca48-11e5-a4b5-01aa75ed71a1/language-en.

Sund, P., & Wickman, P.-O. (2011). Socialization Content in Schools and Education for Sustainable Development—I. A Study of Teachers' Selective Traditions. *Environmental Education Research, 17*(5), 599–624.

Swedish School Law. (2010:800). 6§. Retrieved January 14, 2020, from http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800.

Taylor, S. (2004). Researching Educational Policy and Change in 'New Times': Using Critical Discourse Analysis. *Journal of Education Policy, 19*(4), 433–451. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093042000227483.

The READY-Project. Retrieved January 25, 2020, from http://www.readyproject.eu/.

Tinker, F. (2017). A Case for Expanding Multi-Faith Education: Scotland. In D. R. Wielzen & I. Ter Avest (Eds.), *Interfaith Education for All. Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Action* (pp. 189–200). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Turner, B. S. (2016). Religion in a Post-secular Society. In B. S. Turner (Ed.), *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (pp. 649–667). Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd..

United Nation. (2006, latest update). *Religious Tolerance. Understanding, Tolerance, Coexistence*. Retrieved January 25, 2020, from http://www.religioustolerance.org/un_dec.htm.

Verger, A., Novelli, M., & Altinyelken, H. K. (Eds.). (2018). *Global Education Policy and International Development. New Agendas, Issues and Policies* (2nd ed.). London: Bloomsbury.

Wahlström, N. (2015) *Läroplansteori och didaktik* [*Curriculum Theory and Didactics*]. Malmö: Gleerups Utbildning AB.

Watt, D. (2016). Muslim Female Students Confront Islamophobia: Negotiating Identities In-Between Family, Schooling, and the Mass Media. *Journal of Family Diversity in Education, 2*(1), 21–36.

Westbury, I. (2008). Making Curricula. Why Do States Make Curricula, and How? In F. M. Connelly, M. F. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction* (pp. 45–65). London: Sage.

Williams, R. (1989). Hegemony and the Selective Tradition. In C. de Castell, A. Luke, & C. Luke (Eds.), *Language, Authority and Criticism: Readings on the School Textbook* (pp. 56–60). Philadelphia, PA: The Falmer Press.

von Brömssen, K., Ivkovits, H., & Nixon, G. (2020). Religious Literacy in the Curriculum in Compulsory Education in Austria, Scotland and Sweden—A Three-Country Policy Comparison. *Journal of Beliefs & Values, 41*(2), 132–149.